

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4904

January 11, 2007

The Honorable Alberto Gonzales  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Gonzales:

The U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (OIG) recently released Audit Report 07-05, "The Department of Justice's Grant Closeout Process." In that audit, the OIG identified millions of dollars in unused federal grant funding that, because of DOJ mismanagement, is lingering in federal coffers instead of being distributed to state and local law enforcement partners who can put that money to good use. The OIG concluded that the Department of Justice "substantially failed to ensure that grants were closed appropriately and in a timely manner. If the grants had been closed out more timely, hundreds of millions of dollars in questioned costs could have been used to provide the DOJ with additional resources to fund other programs."

Our nation is facing an increasingly dire violent crime problem. The 2005 FBI Uniform Crime Report showed a startling increase in violent crime, reporting the largest single year percent increase in violent crime in fourteen years. Unfortunately, this trend also was reflected in the preliminary figures released by the FBI for 2006. In examining this problem, the Police Executive Research Forum's recent report, "A Gathering Storm—Violent Crime in America," faulted the federal government for failing to act as a true partner with local authorities in fighting crime. The report noted, among other things, the decreased federal involvement in and funding for crime prevention and community policing. Time and time again, I hear from our law enforcement partners at the state and local level that they are desperate for federal support for domestic crime reduction initiatives. While we all appreciate the effects of limited budgets and new challenges in fighting terrorism, the OIG's report indicates there would be millions of additional dollars available for crime-fighting grants at the state and local level, but for the bureaucratic inefficiencies of the Justice Department. Specifically, had the Justice Department simply closed out and deobligated unused funds in a timely

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manner, additional resources could have been made available for these grant programs.

OIG has identified grant management as one of DOJ's top management and performance challenges for the past six years and has specifically identified unused grant funds that could and should be deobligated in the past. Accordingly, this most recent audit report should not come as a surprise to the Department. I would appreciate a response to these questions:

1. What steps are you taking to ensure that appropriate closed-out grant funds are made available, as quickly as possible, to our state and local law enforcement partners?
2. What steps are you taking to ensure that grant management does not remain on the OIG's list of DOJ top management and performance challenges going forward?

I may ask you about this issue during your upcoming appearance before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and I look forward to your response then or in writing as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Russell D. Feingold". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RUSSELL D. FEINGOLD  
United States Senator